AWOL DIRECT ACTION READER

This reader provides a selection of backround material we feel might be useful in preparing for the S11 protests against the World Economic Forum (WEF) on September 11-13 at Crown Casino in Melbourne. This compilation represents the opinions of no-one in particular. Articles have been lifted/stolen/adapted/boworrowed from many different sources.

As this goes to print, the www.nike.com website has been rerouted to www.s11.org. The s11 campaign and the struggle against global capitalism are on the rise, so get involved! Form an affinity group, educate yourself on the issues, talk to people, get prepared, be creative!!! It's going to be huge!

The movement against corporate globalisation is rapidly spreading around the world. First there was the global street party in 1998 against the G8 (group of eight richest nations).

On June 18th 1999 (J18), hundreds of actions took places across the globe from Sydney to India, New York to Rio. In London thousands took to the streets in a "carnival against capitalism" in the financial district.

In Seattle on November 30th, 1999 (N30), we saw one of the biggest assualts on the arrogence of global capitalism in recent memory. More than 60, 000 people protested against the World Trade Organisation over 5 days. These events were a dramiatic turning point in the struggle against corporate rule.The people in the streets united across boundaries which previously seemed like chasms impossible to cross: earth firstlers and steel workers, turtle conservationists and truckies. A state of emergency was declared and a curfew was placed on the city while the police rampaged through the streets tear gassing and beating protestors (and the general public).

On April 16-17th, 2000 (a16), massive protests occured in Washington DC at the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. More than 1200 people we arrested, the police shutdown 90 city blocks, and told people in the inner city not to come to work.

On MayDay (M1), demonstrations and direct action took place across the world; 1.5 million marched in Japan, and gurruila gardening (Resistance is Fertile!) and McDonalds trashings occoered in London.

In early June, thousands converged on the Organisation of the American States (OAS) meeting in Windsor, Canada, to distrupt attempts to create a free trade zone for the whole of the Americas.

This new global movement is rooted in the concepts of direct action, creativity, and direct democracy. It is successful because it does not just stand outside buildings and chant or sell papers; people around the world are physically confronting and disrupting the conventions our modern day fuedal lords.

Arm the Imagination - Demand the Impossible!

This Direct Action Reader was brought to you from the bowels of the S11 AWOL collective (well, some of the collective - that is to say, its not an AWOL publication *per se*). S11 AWOL (AWOL stands for Autonomous Web of Libertairians) is a consensus-based decision-making network supporting affinity groups & individual actions. S11 AWOL is non-heirarchical, decentralised & autonomous aims to facilitate actions, hold skill-sharing workshops, and empower peoples with information & knowledge, to enable us to most effectively shut down the WEF and say NO to global corporatisation/capitalism

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Glossary

>> The International Monetary Fund (IMF) offers loans to governments which are unable to pay off their debts to foreign banks and creditors. In exchange for loans, the IMF demands economic "reform" policies called structural adjustment programs (SAPs). Voting rights in IMF meetings are awarded according to financial contributions of that country (how much they loan out) and so the wealthier countries dominate the IMF.

>> The World Bank Group: Created at the same time as the IMF and governed in a similarly non-democratic fashion, the World Bank makes loans for large infrastructure projects such as roads, dams and power plants. These are assumed to help people in the developing world, but usually these schemes hurt the environment, provide no lasting local revenue, and generally benefit multinationals. Since the early 1980s, the Bank has also made structural adjustment loans; now more than half of its loans are for the same sort of policy changes as the IMF demands. A branch of the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), makes loans to private corporations in the global south.

>> SAPs: Structural Adjustment Programs. These are designed and implemented by the IMF and World Bank. These programs involve currency re-evaluation and initiatives to promote export products like coffee, carnations, bananas, sugar, and virgin timber. They may also involve the construction of oil pipelines, dams, and roads. Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and free trade ports are also established, which are areas with lax labor standards and environmental protection laws, where sweatshops and pollution abound. These sorts of schemes invite corporations to move into heavily indebted poor countries and exploit the land, and human and natural resources.

>> GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Founded in 1947 at the Bretton Woods convention, this pact between the first world nations was the precursor to the WTO. Along with the IMF and WB, it began the process of trade liberalisation and corporate globalisation.

>> The World Trade Organization (WTO), established in 1995 at the Uruguay Round of GATT, is the international organization charged with enforcing a set of trade rules covering tariffs and quotas as well as "non-tariff barriers to trade" such as food safety laws, product standards, environmental protection and labor laws, and investment policy. The WTO rules limit what tariff and non-tariff policies countries may implement or maintain. These rules are enforced by highly secretive international trade tribunals (DSBs) which can impose sanctions against countries refusing to change their laws to comply with the WTO.

A Brief History of the WTO and Corporate Globalisation

1944: post World War Two. Allied nations gather in New Hampshire, USA at Bretton Woods. There they set about an agenda to enhance export-based trade, and found the World Bank (WB) and the IMF.
1947: GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) signed by Bretton Woods convention.
1979: Thatcher comes to power in the UK. Along with Regan in the USA, and Kohl in Germany, the globalisation process is accelerated.
1994: NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) passed. Creates a free-trade zone between Canada, the US, and Mexico.
1995: Uruguay Round of the GATT. WTO is born, and preparations for MAI begin.
1998: MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) is rescinded by WTO because of public outcry.
1999: WTO Millennium Round in Seattle. Talks collapse.

>> **Free Trade**: the name for the elimination of tariffs and trade barriers between nations.Free Trade is actually a misnomer as powerful nations pushing for Free Trade only do so in areas where they have an economic advantage, and remain protectionist in areas where they don't.

>> **Neoliberalism**: the name for the trade liberalisation process and overall trend towards a globalised economy.

>> **G8**: group of the eight richest nations, including the US, Canada, UK, France, Russia, Germany, Japan, Italy.

>> **G77**: group of 77 poorest nations, who had their inaugural meeting in Havana coincide with the spring Washington meetings of the World Bank and IMF in 2000, where thousands demonstrated.

>> **DSB**: **D**ispute **S**ettlement **B**ody. This is the 'court' of the WTO in Geneva. When country A feels country B is in violation of one of the agreements, it takes country B to a 'tribunal'. The presiding DSB consists of three anonymous people, appointed by country A. The press and the public is not permitted. There have been 191 tribunals since 1995. In every case that has come before the WTO tribunal, it has ruled in favor of Multi-Nationalsí interests and against public safety, human rights, and the environment.

>> **MAI**: **M**ultilateral **A**greement on **I**nvestment. This agreement was proposed at the Uruguay Round of the GATT, and under the Investor to State to State Dispute Resolution clauses, would allow private corporations to bring Nation-States to WTO tribunals, among other dodgey things. It was not passed because of public outcry from NGOs and public interest groups around the world.

>> **NAFTA**: North American Free Trade Agreement. Was passed in 1994 and created a free-trade zone between the US, Mexico and Canada. This abolished all tariffs in trade between these nations, enabling corporations to move operations to Mexico where labor and environmental standards are weaker. Shortly thereafter the Mexican peso devaluated significantly, and 'maquiadora' sweatshops sprung up across the Texan boarder. On Jan 1, 1994 the Zapitistas rose up in Chiapas Mexico because, as subcomandante Marcos said, free trade and neo-liberalism are ia death sentence for the indigenous people.

>> **FTAA/ALCA**: the Free Trade Area of the Americas (Area Libre Comerico de las Americas) is a proposed agreement that is scheduled to be ratified and implemented by 2005. It is the next big trade agreement that will expand the NAFTA to all 35 countries of the Americas and the Caribbean, (except communist Cuba).

>> **APEC**: Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. This free trade agreement/ area consists of 21 members - including the United States, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, Russia and Indonesia. It began as a regional meeting of trade ministers in Canberra in 1989 and now it is attempting to liberalise every aspect of trade in the Pacific Rim. Its member countires account for 2.15 billion people, or 40% of the world's population, but meetings are not open to the public. It has pledged ifull and effective implementation of the Uruguay Round "consistent" to the WTO Agreement, which means DSB tribunal for violations of TRIPs, GATS, ATLI etc.

>> **TRIPs**: Trade Related Intellectual Property means that corporations can claim intellectual ownership of ideas, which in most cases means the patenting of medicinal application of traditional plants. This process allows corporations to steal ideas and practices from indigenous communities without reimbursement or compensation.

>> **ATLI**: Advanced Tariff Liberalisation Initiative- Forest Products Agreement. (Also called the Global Free Logging Agreement.) Eliminates all tariffs and trade barriers in timer, pulp and paper products. This means that green incentives like raw-log export bans, endangered species protection, and woodchip quotas are no longer legal under the WTO rules. It will expand timber harvest in primary forests, weaken forest protection worldwide, and increase global paper consumption by 4%. It will be implemented in developed countries by the year 2000 and in the third world by 2003.

>> **GATS**: General Agreement on Trades and Services. The WTO categorizes things as a 'good' or 'service'. This includes DNA and Genetic Codes, municipal water and sanitation systems, schools, agriculture, and intellectual property. The implications are frightening. The WTO is on a mission to commodify everything on Earth.

What is "Globalisation"?

Globalisation is a term used by economists, the media, and the activist community to describe the process of enhancing the "Global Economy". It is also referred to as "Free Trade", or "Neoliberalism". Globalisation is embodied by global economic institutions, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Globalisation was billed to the public as a irising tide that will lift all boatsî by Michael Moore, head of the WTO. But as this system grows, it must search the globe for ever-cheaper resources and labor, which usually means the relocation of industry to the "third world".

Founded in 1944, The World Bank and the IMF facilitate the Global Economy by loaning Third World Nations large amounts of foreign currency. Usually these loans have many "strings attached". These "strings' tend to pave the way for large multi-national corporations to move into a country and implement projects which usually hurt the environment (industrial forestry, mining, dams, etc.) and people (sweat-shops, non-unionized labor for agriculture and industry, etc.)

The World Bank and IMF are also responsible for collecting on the debts of Third World nations. Because of the billions in debt that many nations owe, they can usually not even pay back the interest rates on their loans, and must take out more loans. The cycle of debt prevents the third world from ever truly ìdevelopingî because it keeps the labor force desperately poor and willing to accept any wage, and the natural resources pitifully cheap.

The World Trade Organisation, which was developed by further liberalising the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) at the Uruguay Round in 1995, is the unelected body, that decides what will happen when one country has a trade dispute with another country. This is called a WTO "Tribunal". The WTO's agenda is to increase global trade, which means decreasing barriers to trade. "Barriers to Trade", as defined by the three members of the Tribunal, can be interpreted as food safety laws (in the case of hormones in beef, or labeling on genetically engineered foods) endangered species protection (in the case against sea turtles and dolphins), or laws which attempt to protect human rights (in the Massachusetts vs. Burma case). When the WTO tribunal rules that one country is in violation of WTO agreements, that country must either overturn itís law (i.e.: un-do it, scratch it off the books, nullify it, rescind it), or consumers, (i.e.: you and me) will pay more when buying iluxury goodsî from overseas because of WTO imposed tariffs, meant to punish a country for itís ìtrade barriersî. In short, the World Trade Organisation has the authority to undermine legislation, passed by sovereign nation-states.

Essentially, the WTO, and the "new" Global Economy, hurt the environment, exploit workers, and disregard civil societyís concerns. The only beneficiaries of Globalisation are the largest, richest, multi-national corporations.

What is the World Economic Forum?

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is an exclusive, un-elected, invite-only international organisation composed of the world's 1000 largest trans-national corporations, dedicated to pursuing economic management on a global scale. The WEF is part of the group of non-governmental organisations that effectively 'manage' the global economy - this group consisting of the WEF, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, & the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The WEF is an organisation made up of the CEO's of the 1000 foremost global corporations, along with the trade ministers of the worlds wealthiest countries, and leading 'globalist' academics and media moguls. Incorporated since 1971 as a foundation, the WEF claims to be "independent, impartial and not-for-profit, tied to no political, partisan or national interests." For the past thirty years, the WEF has held regular summits and meetings with the express purpose of developing policies to 'manage globablisation'. And while it is a private organisation like the World Trade Organisation, the WEF Summits have a significant impact on public policy throughout the world (for example, the WEF has a consultative status with the United Nations). They say as much on their own website;

"Over the past 27 years, the World Economic Forum has evolved into a major force for economic integration at the corporate as well as the national economic levels. It has played a key role in identifying new trends in the economic, political, social and cultural domains, and in shaping strategies and actions for corporations and countries to integrate these changes and maximise their potentials...In addition to the official sessions at the World Economic Forum activities, the literally thousands of private discussions that have taken place have provided the Foundation Members, the Global Growth Company Members and the Constituents with unique opportunities for sharing information, for pursuing business opportunities, and forging global partnerships and alliances."

WEF meetings are organised to allow business an avenue to influence government leaders, and to allow its members to develop coordinated strategies that aim to weaken trade unions and environmental protection, rob indigenous people of their lands and rights, and intensify the transfer of wealth from poor nations to rich ones. As their annual report states, WEF regional activities "play a central role in creating more dynamic and investor friendly environments."

Its 1982 annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, brought together cabinet members of major countries with heads of international organisations, such as the World Bank, IMF, and GATT. This special "Informal Gathering of Trade Ministers" from 17 countries organised the launch of the Uruguay Round, which is where the World Trade Organisation was founded.

In September the WEF will hold the Asia-Pacific Economic Summit, "Asia/Pacific in the 21st Century: Leveraging the new drivers of growth." The summit is jointly sponsored by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian-Davos Connection (the Australian arm of the WEF). This summit will take place at Crown Casino in Melbourne. A massive protest against the WEF is being organised to demonstrate to the WEF, and to the WTO, World Bank and the IMF, that we don't want the world that they envision, and that we don't want corporate control of our lives, our environment, and our world.

Some Members of the WEF

Amcor Ltd.	Hewlett Packard
BHP	Indian petro-chemical corpoation
Visa	International Paper Company
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Kraft Foods
Dow Corning	Mitsubishi Group
Dupont	Mobil
Exxon	National Australia Bank
Honeywell	Nestle
Hydro-Quebec	Price-waterhouse-coopers
McDonaldís	Royal Dutch- Shell
Microsoft	Siemans
Monsanto	Telstra Corporation
Nike	Coca-Cola
Phillip-Morris	De Beers
Rio Tinto	Thyssen Krupp
Boeing	Toyota
3M	Viacom
Amazon.com	Waste Management International
BP ñ Amoco	Western Mining Corporation
Broken Hill Proprietary Co.	Estee Lauder
Cheveron	Forbes
Citibank	Ford
Colonial Bank Australia	General Motors
ELF Aquatine	Groupe Danone
Gulfstream Aerospace corporation	Delta- Galil Industries Ltd.

The Decline of the Welfare State and the Rise of Corporate Rule

The current structure of the global economy was designed by government and corporate elites and serves their interests. Our "democracy", which was never really that good to begin with, has been further diminished as corporate power has increased and global economic bureaucracies have been established. As corporate profits boom, social services are cut and McCulture spreads, why is it so?

Countries that have the cheapest labour and resources, the least environmental regulations, and lowest business taxes are the most attractive for corporate investment. International institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), are tools used by corporations to gain access to a country's markets, resources and cheap labour. This enables corporations to shift production to the cheapest location and pit governments against one another, producing a "race to the bottom" in working and environmental standards. This is called "free trade", but it is really the freedom of corporations to plunder wherever and whatever they want. Free trade is essentially about enabling corporations to shift their capital (money) and production, unimpeded by government regulations. The IMF, World Bank, WTO etc, serve to enforce an economic model that serves corporate interests to the detriment of people and the environment.

The need and desire to attract corporate investment by reducing taxes, wages and environmental standards results in several different government policies and social effects:

- Governments sponsor union busting, casualise labour and maintain high levels of unemployment to force people into fierce competition for jobs in order to reduce wages.
- Governments cut corporate taxes (eg the GST). This shifts the tax burden onto the poor and decreases tax revenue available for social services: hospitals/childcare/schools/universities etc.
- Governments privatise public entities (universities, hospitals, transport, etc.), concentrating economic control into fewer private hands. Governments are complicate in facilitating this concentration of corporate power because of shared interests (ie helping their mates make a buck) and the assurance of a competitive position in the new global economy. Privitisiation means that the public has little or no voice in economic decisions and the domination of the profit motive in government.
- Governments support repressive regimes (Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Burma etc) to maintain corporate access to cheap labour, resources and tax breaks.
- Governments deregulate industries and allow big businesses to merge into mega-corporations with huge economic control, which limits the voice and sway of everyday citizens in the "democracy".
- Governments deregulate and open their markets to allow foreign investment. This exposes local economies to market fluctuations, and allows the relocation of industry to the third world where labour and resources are cheaper.

Governments that may wish to challenge corporate power can not; massive corporate control of the global economy limits the ability of nations to make ethical decisions about their populations. Raising environmental standards, taxes, wages and working conditions to acceptable levels results in "capital flight" - the removal of money and investment from an economy - leading to job losses and economic downturn. The current paradigm of economic globalisation, designed by both governments and corporations, is simply unsustainable, environmentaly and economically. The "race to the bottom" will continue unless there is a fundamental and direct challenge by people around the world to the concentrations of power in financial institutions, corporations, and governments. This challenge must occur globally and on a grass roots level as no single government, (save the U.S.) is able to break the rules of the new global economy without suffering the dire consequences of capital flight and world isolation. Government regulations or institutional reforms can not be the answer to the problems created by globalisation. An international movement that puts people and the environment first and allows for local autonomy is sweeping the globe because people have learned that the corporations and government are in cahoots! Grassroots action and direct democracy are the mass response to late capitalism.

Corporations and the Globalization of Poverty

"What emerges [looking back over the past 50 years] is an arresting picture of unprecedented human progress and unspeakable human misery, of humanity's advances on several fronts mixed with humanity's retreat on several others, of a breath-taking globalization of prosperity side by side with a depressing globalization of poverty."
United Nations Human Development Report, 1994

While fostering an expanding international system of production and distribution of goods, the world economy leaves more than half of the Earth's population out of the loop.

- In 1960, the 20% of the world's people who live in the richest coutries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%. by 1995 it was 82 times
- the 15 richest people in the world have assets that exceed the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of sub-Saharan Africa

To be sure, advances have been made. Technology, most often developed and sold by the transnationals, has given us wings--allowing us to fly and drive across the earth, and to communicate by telephone, television, computer and fax. Medical advances have cured diseases previously thought to be incurable. In many places in the Third World life expectancy rates have risen, infant mortality has dropped, nutrition has improved, fertility rates have fallen (in every region but Africa), and education has become more widespread.

But all of this nifty technology has done nothing to bridge the gap between rich and poor. If anything, it has increased it. We still live in an increasingly unequal world. A world where

- More than a thousand million people still live in poverty, a tenth of them in the industrialised world.
- a fifth of the developing world's population goes hungry every night.
- a quarter lacks access to even a basic necessity like safe drinking water.
- and a third lives in a state of abject poverty--at such a margin of human existence that words simply fail to describe it.

and where 20% of the worlds population (people from the highest income countries) comsume 86% of the worlds resources. The bottom 20% consume less than 10% of the worlds resources

Overall, the gap between rich and poor, which doubled worldwide between 1960 and 1991, continues to grow, as the benefits of corporate globalization fall into the hands of an elite group of recipients.

The seven largest economies of the industrialized North--the US, Japan, Germany, Canada, France, Italy and the UK--which make up less than 12 percent of the world's population, consume 43% of the world's fossil fuel production, 64 percent of the world's paper, and from 55 to 60 percent of all the aluminum, copper, lead, nickel and tin.

The United States--the largest economy in the world--manages, with less than 5 percent of the planet's population, to consume nearly one-quarter of all fossil fuels, and more than one third of all paper, while creating fifty percent of the world's solid waste.

The heavily skewed nature of the world economy underlines the fundamental unsustainability of corporate globalization. For if the world economy's driving forces continue to exclude more than fifty percent of the Earth's population--and indeed are widening the gap between rich and poor--then this system, which is both failing to meet the needs of the present and compromising those of future generations, simply cannot be a recipe for sustainablity and equity, as its advocates claim it is.

Stay as you are.

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NIKE'S IN TROUBLE! PROFITS ARE DOWN! THEY'RE LAYING OFF EMPLOYEES!
NIKE "OVER-SHOOCKED" MARKET, SHAREHOLDERS
OH NO! WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?
WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE... WE MUST CONVINCE OTHERS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE COMPANY!
HEY THERE! A MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR CORPORATION NEEDS YOUR HELP! PLEASE, ANYTHING YOU CAN SPARE!
THE CHILDREN! WE MUST REACH THE CHILDREN!
HELLO YOUTHS! IT IS INDEED STILL VERY COOL TO DRESS EXACTLY THE SAME AS EVERYBODY ELSE!
COMBAT THE NEGATIVE CRITICISMS OF THEIR THIRD WORLD FACTORY CONDITIONS!
NIKE NICE!
NIKE AT LEAST THEY'RE NOT EXPLOITING WHITE KIDS!
SWEATSHOPS? SWEAT IS GOOD FOR YOU! EVER HEAR OF A SAUNA? AND CHILD LABOUR? TO THINK OF HOW I WASTED MY CHILDHOOD! I COULD HAVE BEEN MAKING MONEY!
HELP NIKE IMPRINT BRAND LOYALTY THROUGH MINDLESS REPETION OF THE NEW, FEEL-GOOD SLOGAN! DON'T "JUST DO IT", IT'S "I CAN"!
HOW REFRESHING! HOW UPBEAT! HOW "LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD"! IT'S MY NEW MANTRA!
BY YUNG
AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, BUY MORE STUFF! TO BE SURE TO REWARD, UH, REMIND YOU, NIKE'S GOING TO PRODUCE EVEN MORE ADS!
IT'S WHAT THEY DO BEST! MAYBE THAT'S THE PROBLEM! I FORGOT THEY MADE SHOES!

Affinity Groups

An affinity group is a group of people who have an affinity for each other, know each others strengths and weaknesses, support each other, and do (or intend to do) political/campaign work together. Most of us will have had some childhood/formative experience of being part of a group whether informally, as in a group of kids that are the same age and live in the same street, suburb or town, or formally, as in being involved in a sports team. However, affinity groups differ from these for numerous reasons, as explained below, (hierarchy, trust, responsibility to each other etc).

The concept of 'affinity groups has a long history. They developed as an organising structure during the Spanish Civil war and have been used with amazing success over the last thirty years of feminist, anti-nuclear, environmental and social justice movements around the world. They were first used as a structure for a large scale nonviolent blockade during the 30,000 strong occupation of the Ruhr nuclear power station in Germany in 1969, and then in the United States occupations / blockades of the Seabrook nuclear power station in '71 when 10,000 were arrested and again many times in the highly successful US anti-nuclear movement during the '70's and '80's. Their use in sustaining activists through high levels of police repression has been borne out time and again. More recently, they have been used constructively in the mass protest actions in Seattle and Washington.

We don't have to use the word 'affinity group' - blockade teams, action groups, cells, action collectives etc. have all been used to describe the same concept. It would be best to find the most relevant name depending on when and where the structure is used. Also, each affinity group can choose their own name. For example, at the AIDEX protest, there was a 'Perseverance Affinity Group' named after the Fitzroy pub where itís members had their first meeting. Other names range across a whole gamut of political sensibilities (or the lack thereof); from the "Screaming Trees", the "Alcoholics against the Bomb", to the "Buckrabendinni Action Tribe".

When it comes to demonstrating, or being politically active, there are numerous advantages to being part of an affinity group. It eliminates the feeling of isolation that comes from being one person in a crowd, and removes our reliance on a small group of self appointed marshals. It provides a way to organize ourselves so that everyone works and makes decisions directly with people that they know, thus turning a rabble of 1,000 into 100 organised groups of 10. These groups can then interact co-operatively as a cluster of groups, with some working symbiotically with others, and others tag-teaming.

It provides emotional support for every person 'Together we stand, divided we freak out'. Also, it makes everyone accountable to someone else ñ if they get freaked out and act strangely, then there is some one there to help them out. Finally, it makes it harder for agent provocateurs (e.g. under cover cops, or corporately sponsored trouble-makers) to disrupt an action.

As well as playing an important role as part of a larger street demonstration, affinity groups offer a workable size group from which creative and inspiring, autonomous actions can spring, either spontaneously or pre-planned.. It effectively empowers us to move away from being a passive marcher in an anonymous mass of demonstrators, by become an active part of the struggle at its roots.

As well as being useful in mass actions, affinity groups or clusters of affinity groups can be the model used for working out / thinking of their own inspired actions or other campaigning approaches .

Although there is a high degree of autonomy, AGs don't always operate entirely on their own - especially during large-scale actions involving multiple AGs. An efficient decision-making structure needs to surround the individual AGs. This usually involves some sort of delegates meeting or 'spokes council' to which each AG sends a representative and is a two way process through which individual AG have a direct say in decision-making without everybody attending the one meeting. It works best when the spokes-council only considers basic structural or over-arching logistics concerns of the actions and leaves the details of actions up to each group. Ideally, this allows for a high level of co-ordinated action amongst many autonomous groups. In practice this is often difficult and can easily become unwieldy - predominately because we are simply not used to, or experienced in very decentralised forms of decision-making, AG delegates find it difficult to truly represent their affinity group and fully translate information and decisions. There is also a tension between the spokes-council's decisions and the autonomy of each AG which, due to lack of trust or poor communication can easily become a problem.

However, by organising at the grass roots, many of us are maintaining the end and means of our struggle. If we want to live in a world without capitalists, bosses, stewards, feudal lords etc, then we must build from the root. S11 should not just be about one big action, but countering the WEF from as many angles as possible.

This all begs the question, "with whom do I form an affinity group?" The simple answer to this is the people that you know, and that feel the same way about the issue(s) in question. They could be people you see in a tutorial, work with, go out with, or live with. The point to stress however, is that you have something in common other than the issue that is bringing you all together, and that you trust them and they trust you.

An important aspect to being part of an affinity group is to get to know where each other is at regarding the campaign or issue. This can involve having a meal together, and you all discussing it after you have eaten, or doing some form of activist related training together, like attending a nonviolence, conflict resolution or facilitation workshop, developing de-arresting strategies if needed, working out how to deal with certain police tactics ie. snatch squads, police horses.

You should all have a shared idea of what you want individually & collectively from the action/campaign, how it will conceivably go, what support you will need from others, and what you can offer others. It helps if you have agreement on certain basic things: how active, how spiritual, how nonviolent, how touchy-feely, how spiky, how willing to risk arrest, when youíll bail-out, your overall political perspective etc. But then again, you may all just work together at a job, play music or hike together etc.

an affinity group, there are a whole range of different roles that itís members can perform. A lot of these roles will be determined by the aim or raison detre of the AG, but could include a Media Spokesperson, to either talk to / deal with news media , a Quick decision facilitator, 1st Aid to take care of people that are hurt, a Spokesperson to convey the affinity groupís ideas and decisions to other AGís, a Legal Observer, and Arrest support.

As well as these roles within itself the AG can take on a specialised role in the way it interacts with other AGs, or operates within the breadth of the protest or campaign. There can be affinity groups specialising in copwatching, countering iprotest highjackersî, legal observation, catering, communication & cluster liaison, medical., clowning, or good old common garden variety blockading. With this role focus, each AG can do it's job and support the work of other affinity groups. In this way, many affinity groups form an interdependent network that achieves so much more than a large group of individual activists.

Within the context of a demonstration, as important as the aspect of the AG that is out on the street, is the support crew. They do all the mundane stuff, and regrettably donít get the recognition that they deserve. They can walk/feed pets, water plants, childcare, call employers and freaked out parents/children, pay rent etc. As a consequence, more people can participate (and risk more) because they have help with these things. The emotional support is not to be underestimated; apart from the offers of hugs, kisses, and phone calls, people feel safe enough to risk themselves when they know that they have emotional support. Support crew can also indirectly support direct action by supplying information to news media and interested community groups, raising funds and providing logistical support, like food, water and accommodation. The street aspect of an AG, and its support crew can (and should) swap round, so that there is a clear understanding within it as to the importance of all roles in the groupís effectiveness.

The aim at the end of the day is to look after yourself and each other, have fun, and work towards a maximised degree of constructive social change.

Direct Action Gets the Goods
Earth First & Reclaim the Streets

"Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul."
-- Edward Abbey

DIRECT ACTION enables people to develop a new sense of self confidence and an awareness of their individual and collective power. DIRECT ACTION is founded on the idea that people can develop the ability for self rule only through practice, and proposes that all persons directly decide the important issues facing them. There are no "50 simple ways to save the planet." There are innumerable very difficult ways. Recycling and "setting a good example" don't cut it when you are the last generation with any chance of implementing a human-engineered cure. Direct Action means personal, focused effort on the front lines in the war against the Earth.

HALT THE DESTRUCTION - RAISE THE STAKES
STRENGTHEN THE RESOLVE

A direct action is the most empowering event imaginable, a rite of passage that fills the participant with pride. There is the special satisfaction of a David defying Goliath. We learn to work in concert with others with life-affirming values. Demonstrations "demonstrate" to the culprits, and to the world, that when all our letters are ignored, our arguments mitigated, and our legal appeals denied, we still refuse to accept the accelerating destruction. We put our bodies and our time where our mouths are on the front lines! We demonstrate our fear, hurt, and rage against the despoilers. Now with humanity itself endangered by suicidal "progress," we deny it power, refuse to acquiesce, refuse to be stilled! In general, there is no need for any unplanned arrests. Civil disobedience, even when decided on spontaneously, is a deliberate, thought-out act of conscience. Be prepared.

DIRECT ACTION encompasses a whole range of activities, from organising co-ops to engaging in resistance to authority.

Demonstrations
Demonstrations include marches, street parties, costumes, skits, presenting our position to reporters, making demands of corporados and government lackeys, appearing as "endangered species" at public hearings, and making a show of opposition at the scene of destruction (timber sale, condo construction site etc.). Stumps have been deposited on rangers' desks, manure from public lands-grazing cattle stacked against air-conditioner vents and helium balloons hoisting banners with appropriate messages released inside convention centers. Hundred-foot banners have been strung across rivers and highways, down smokestacks and across the face of buildings. To be most effective, a demonstration should be:

DYNAMIC AND UNCOMPROMISED
Have clear intent, clear tactics and specific targets. Identify the perpetrators and target them, not the system in general.

COLORFUL AND CREATIVE
Create unique and surprising actions that challenge and amuse.

INFORMATIVE
Get out the simple message of the goals of your campaign with fact sheets and handouts, songs, skits and chants.

FLEXIBLE
Be ready on a moment's notice to change plans as the situation changes, taking advantage of unforeseen opportunities, as in the sudden appearance of an offending executive or an unwatched piece of heavy equipment. Come up with a quick alternative when the Governor is not in, the building sealed off, the cops out in force or in a bad mood, or the meeting moved to some other location at the last minute. Be prepared!

DIRECT ACTION is not just a tactic, it is individuals asserting their ability to control their own lives and to participate in social life without the need for mediation or control by bureaucrats or professional politicians.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
Civil Disobedience can be the most effective action of all, involving situations where arrests are anticipated and possibly desired. These include but are not limited to:

OCCUPATIONS AND SIT-INS
Take over the boardrooms, offices and even the homes of unresponsive decision makers and bureaucrats.

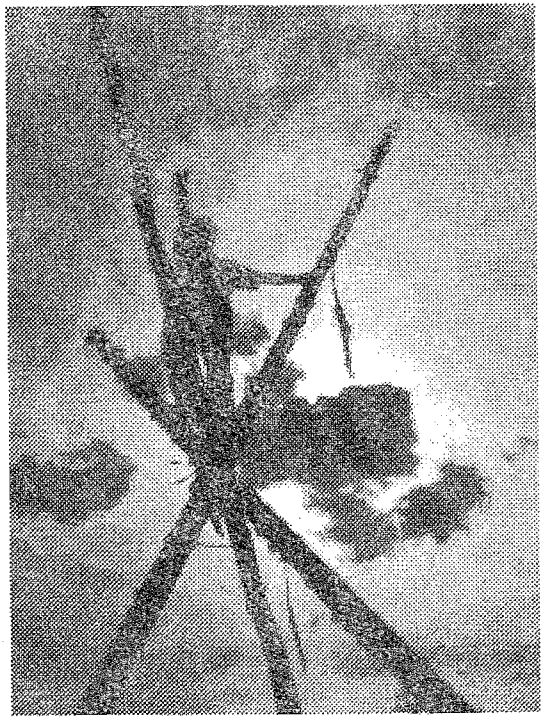
BLOCKADES
It may be a symbolic gesture of defiance, it may slow them down and cost them time and money, and it may also stop them in their tracks. It is a surefire guarantee that it will take the focus out of the boardrooms and hearing chambers and put it where it belongs, in the pubic sphere, at the scene of the crime. In this way you can bring the destruction right into people's living rooms. Methods include everything from sitting in the road or chaining yourself to gates or equipment, to setting your feet in wet cement and letting it harden, or burying yourself in the road up to your neck.

MEDIA

You can't hope to change people's minds or put pressure on politicians without calling attention to the damage. Civil disobedience or a clever banner-hanging exposes the issue on the front pages of papers that normally hide a single paragraph about ecological catastrophe on the back pages next to the ads and obituaries. Arrests, in particular, sway sentiment by impressing on others the depth of our concern. Make a press release for all radio, TV and newspapers in your area. Keep it simple and to the point, or they will quote your least relevant lines and leave out the most important information. Stick to a few short paragraphs making clear the desired result of your actions. It is a good idea to put in a few good quotes attributed to one or more of your spokespersons in the last paragraph. Remember, the average "sound bite" or quote lasts less than nine seconds. Read them aloud to each other to make sure they sound clear. A good press release should be no more than one page long, double spaced, with wide margins. It is better for the media to call for more info then it is to issue a long, rambling diatribe.

Send press releases out about a week before your event. Follow up with phone calls to the various stations and papers the day of the action. Never assume they've read your release. Get the name of the reporter and ask them if they plan to come. You might hint at the more radical (photo opportunity!) aspects of your action, but don't tip them off to anything the cops shouldn't have details of ahead of time. Look for the reporters that promised to show up, and make sure that they have someone in your group to talk to who is knowledgeable.

DIRECT ACTION places moral commitment above positive law. DIRECT ACTION is not a last resort when other methods have failed, but the preferred way of doing things.



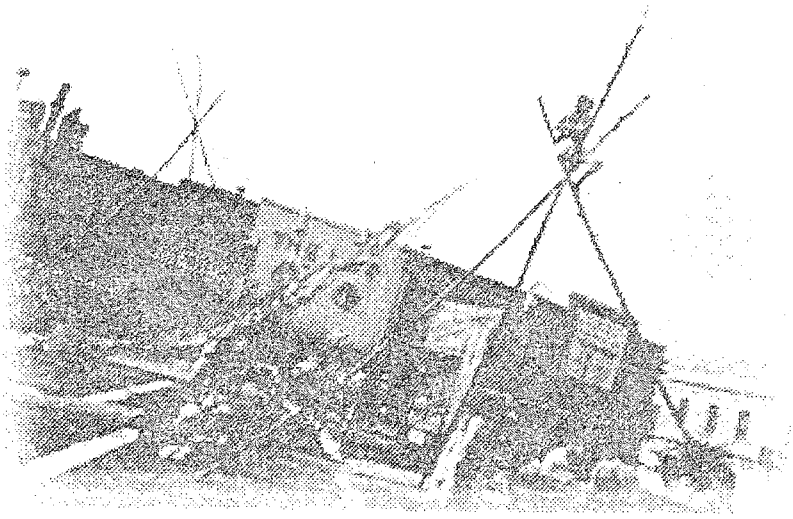
DIRECT ACTION:

>> Once committed, blockaders should not move even if it means their arrest; stand your ground. To break and run not only defeats the purpose of your action, it may endanger others by encouraging a game of "chicken" when those whom you are trying to stop become convinced that you will not stand your ground. Don't put yourself in a dangerous position unless you are willing to face danger without moving. Otherwise, choose a less risky method of expression.

>> Identify potential arrestees ahead of time, have a list of their names and home addresses, and pair each of them up with a support person who can be responsible for their keys and IDs, monitor and record their arrest using a camera or video if possible, and follow them through the legal process until they are released on bail or on their own recognizance.

>> Plan your actions well. Prepare the skits, songs, chants, costumes, signs and handouts in advance. Meet with plenty of time before the action to circle up and focus on the emotional and spiritual motivations for our urgent work. Circle up after to make sure no one is unaccounted for, discuss what did and didnrrt work, and plan a time to meet and do it again!

There is a common perception that ecological issues are different to social ones. This separation and presentation of the ecological crisis as unconnected to other forms of exploitation only serves the interests of business and state, and needs to be overcome if society is to survive. Direct action is no longer a fringe sport for extremists, but turns out to have been around for a long time as central form of human activity.



Arm the Imagination

Here are a few ideas from a discussion some excitable people had recently. These are of course only dreams - we wouldn't actually suggest action...ooooh no. Think along the lines of 'imagine a day where...' Thousands of activists all dressed up in suits joined the commuter throng - blending in completely untill surreal things begin to occur like:

Planted controversial conversations / heated debates between people who blend in to the crowds of commuters spring up in tubes, in cafes, pubs, about the connections between the capital and profit and exploitation and innequality and so on...Invisible theatre.

Conferences and special training events take place inside the offices of companies about the damaging effects of the profit mentality and why Capitalism does not work and what alternatives there could be.

People on tubes and trains start reading look alike but propaganda newspapers.Mock pickets crop up every where outside offices proclaiming unfair working conditions and exploitation ...to encourage workers to combat wage slavery and join in.

People make GREEDY CAPITAL MONSTERS' in groups with their bodies and movement and noise dart in and out of commuters, demanding 'profit profit profit'...they could leave a trail of destruction and destitution behind...or leaflets.

People on tubes start conversations about going home "I've had enough of this commuting stress...this job...there must be more to life then this" ...vs automaton commuter mentality..'.turn round, go home.. phone in sick/well/ dead.'

Groups of scattered people take off suit jackets at same time to reveal slogan t-shirt or bright red blood stained shirts ...stop...put suit jackets back on and carry on as if all was normal...or hold up boards with slogans or taped to the sides of brief cases in a row... then carry on... A game of MAD ensues...where people run around trying to give away blood money...to absolve themselves of responsibility for all the evil deeds done in its name. Casino machines appear on street corners...IMF bankers & capitalists giving away countries instead of newpapers.

Newspaper sellers start yelling slogans and giving away propaganda mixed in with evening / evading standards...Invisible theatre debates and sketches spring up around newspaper stands about, For example, profit & control motives for USA bombing of Yugoslavia or how theres a massive crisis on the stock market and its all about to crash!!!????

Trails of blood money and blood are left by people in suits in crowded rush hour periods bags of blood money are left lying around...with labels like 'at the expense of the people of central America...or 'Mine all mine' or ëdon't blame me...I don't know what the board of directors get up to.'

Guided tours of the city go on all day - telling the real tales of globalisation and the profit and plunder of capitalism...pointing out the culprits. Some people in big corporations literally get (vegan?) egg on their faces and have to eat PIE Make the tubes/ trains more comfortable, spacious i.e. by blowing up those plastic chairs and sitting down..."whats the rush for profit...survival of the most economically fittest."

Create your own troops of automaton / capitalist robots into the crowds of commuters...to march in step to the beat of 'profit...capital...must work...must obey...' etc...they could even malfunction in busy places??!!

Demand the Impossible! Arm the Imagination!

The Rising Tide of Global Resistance

In past years there has been growing unrest as capitalism and the state bring our environment to near collapse, push workers to the wall, create a huge under-class, disposess people of their land and continues the genocidal war against indigenous people. While capitalism takes a turn towards a "free-trade" agenda, removing barriers to trade, ripping threw labour standards and removing environmental protection, economies are forced to open up to exploitation , the inequalities between the 1st and 3rd World grow, as do the divisions between each countries classes.

Money and economic decisions are drawn further away into the pockets of Multinationals CEO's, with the assistance of national representatives of the ruling class. The modern "free trade" version of capitalism, does not mean the state is loosing power. The role of the state has always been to oppress its people and has become more streamlined under "Globalisation". Part of "Globalisation" is the ruling class making changes to its methods of control in the search for new markets and larger profits for the rich. As the World Banks 1997 report titled "The State in a Changing World" says the state's purpose is in "safeguarding the health of the financial system".

While "free-market" policies force the poor of countries to work to restructure to "export-orientated" policies, many of the world's poor are at the same time denied the freedom to control their lives and resources, and the state cracks down on those that choose to resist. Often fleeing from war or economic uncertainty people are locked up as slaves for cheap labour in detention centres or prisons, while those who dissent are under the watchful eye of the law. The Twin oppression of Capital and State has never been worse.

OUR RESISTANCE IS AS TRANS-NATIONAL AS CAPITAL

Over the past decade the poor and oppressed have stepped up their fight-back for a free and ecological world. There has been an upsurge in solidarity across borders, resistance in the workplace, the forests, the fields and in the streets the world over.

From the Zapatista's in the Jungles of Mexico, to the workplaces of Bangladesh, to the resistance of the landless in Brazil, in every corner a variety of struggles are reaching out to each other from across the globe.

Increasingly, isolated single issue campaigns are realising that there struggle is something larger. People are realising that they must challenge power, resist capitalism and state if their struggle is to be successful. Groups and movements are learning from one another, increasingly coming together and developing new innovative forms of struggle. Coalitions like 1st world radical environmentalists and third world indigenous populations, between workers and radical greens and indigenous nations. A new spirit of solidarity growing.

Many of these movements are spontaneous, fluid and dynamic, reacting to their own experience and dreaming new visions of a world of many worlds, many of them practice non-hierarchical decision making, using consensus and direct democracy and believing in direct action to be the preferred method of struggle. In many of these groups there is a strong anarchistic sentiment, to resist top-down methods and party politics, instead favouring resistance from the grassroots.

Hopefully not only will this movement challenge the worst excess of capitalism ie. free trade policies, but do away with capitalism and the state and strive to build lasting solidarity between all the worlds oppressed and build a world of grassroots / direct democracy and local control of resources.

New Years Day - 1994 - "Ya Basta" - "Enough is Enough"
- In the jungles of Mexico, the Zapatistas resist the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

On new years day 1994, the indigenous uprising of the Zapatistas changed the rules of global resistance. The people of some of the poorest provinces of Mexico, rose up to say "Ya Basta" or "Enough is Enough". After 500 years of oppression and resistance they had developed their own mix of indigenous resistance and anarchism, occupying towns and resisting the forces of capitalism, neo-liberalism, foreign Multinationals and the Mexican army.

It has been argued that the Zapatistas differ from the usual Marxist-Leninists, in that "The most common mistake is to treat the movement as a political party or organisation rather than a social movement. The common feature of all the Zapatista communities (is) a commonly agreed structure of decision making. What is agreed upon is the decision making structures which combine a radical democracy with more traditional indigenous assemblies". Their passion and imagination has blow new life into many some emerging social movements.

Meanwhile around the world, movements Earth-First!, anarchists, squatters, urban social movements and workers are connecting. Their innovative approaches to have broken with many elements of the old or authoritarian left mold of politics, their struggles have been social, remained imaginative and adapted to changing situations.

Reclaim the Streets,(RTS) from England is a great example of this.(www.gn.apc.org/rts) Emerging from illegal street festivals in 1995, in protest to the domination of the car, oil and consumerism, they have moved on to bigger and more daring actions; solidarity with indigenous communities, anarchists and workers in struggle.

The critique of everyday life inherent in most of RTS activity has deepened the traditional left focus on the means of production and extended a critique of capitalism out to every aspect of life, drawing much inspiration from the Situationists of the Paris '68, student / worker uprising. Their web-site says "What unites us is a belief in the necessity and legitimacy of direct action, and a view that action must be taken here and now to solve the ecological and social crisis we face".

RTS have been a key figure in the Zapatista inspired network People's Global Action (www.agp.org) and have also been prime movers in International Days of Action against Capitalism like June 18, 1999. (www.infoshop.org/june18.html)

Peoples Global Action (PGA) (www.agp.org), of which RTS are a part, is an international direct action network. It comprises of innovative social movements from; KRRS, the 10 Million strong grassroots Indian Farmer Union of the cremate Monsanto campaign fame; MST; Landless workers movement from Brazil, Squatters and activists from the Netherlands, Nigerian Indigenous activists against oil exploration and genocide and many others groups. This innovative network strives to build solidarity between these diverse struggles has been an active part in the anti-globalisation movement.

During the "J18", Day of Action against Capitalism, in which RTS, PGA and other groups took part actions were taken by a diverse arrange of creative, inspired direct action groups and coalitions in over 33 countries. Londonís Financial district was brought to a standstill, actions happened all over the city (approximately 20) and culminated in 10000+ on the streets, and the Financial Futures Exchange was occupied.

Even more exciting was the amazing solidarity that was shown from all continents, 10 000 indigenous people and environmentalists were on the streets of Nigeria in protest, Bangladesh domestic workers largely women, organised a solidarity demonstration "against TORTURE, KILLING, RAPE, KIDNAPING, BURNING,FORCEFUL PROSTITUTION,TERMINATION and SHELTERLESS". all escalated by capitalism. In Australia, there were critical mass rides, dumping of Wombats at the Stock Exchange and the pieing of Kim Beazley, amongst other actions. A variety of other actions including, "Carnivals against Capitalism" took place in the Czech Republic, Sydney and cities all over the world.

This event was based on an organisational principle of autonomy. Each group had control of its actions and used principles of consensus decision making and affinity groups to take care of tasks. Most notable was the absence of political party groups and people pouting the correct party line, these was the mark of success of the events.

The Battle of Seattle.

The events that took place on November 30th in Seattle (and in solidarity all over the world culminating in the successful shutting down of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting were a hopeful end to the 20th Century.

The diversity of the thousands on the streets was what was most startling. Coalitions previously unheard of have begun to coalesce and a new spirit of daring has caught those who dream of a future without exploitation. Unionists and Turtle conservationists protesting WTO legislation, Earth-Firstlers, Workers and Anarchists. It was a huge militant and festive action. The effective coordination was largely based on old anarchistic principles of autonomous organising, affinity groups, clusters of affinity groups and spokes-council meetings of affinity group delegates. Literally thousands of people took direct action and shut down the conference in the face of "Darth Vader" costume wearing riot-police and national guard troops, throwing tear gas and shooting rubber bullets.

Anarchists groups and individuals had a huge role, with involvement with "Art and Revolution", and the "Direct Action Network". Thousands organised ë anarchically íproviding, jail solidarity, media activism, medical aid and other tasks. Actions also took worldwide, most notably in London again where demonstrators came up against the violence of the police.

As well as groups with a clear anarchist or radical perspective, there were also some scary developments in Seattle with reactionary groups calling for nationalistic solutions to the WTO, advocating protectionism and creating a false divide between the State and Trade bodies. These groups, wanting only to trim the worst excesses of capitalism in the name of racist policy and the reactionary stances by some of the organised labour contingents, are frightening developments. Protectionism is a barrier to struggle and pits the oppressed in one country against another. In light of this there is a need to organise internationally and across borders, in order to maintain the "movement" from loosing its anarchic edge. The coopting efforts of the mass media, liberals, the reactionary right and Marxist-Leninist left should not be underestimated. From these coalitions the new anti-globalisation movement has spawned a plethora of days of action around the globe.To name just a few the; Davos; World Economic Forum meeting in Switzerland, Mayday actions around the globe amd protests and action against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington.

These are exciting, frightening times, and the importance of a radical agenda in fighting the likes of the World Economic Forum must see them in the framework of capitalism and hierarchical social relations. There must be no compromise with these institutions, and the forms of resistance we take should come from the root, maintain innovation and resist cooptation by state, media, reformists and authoritarian groups. The Anarchic nature is what has made this ëmovementí reach out and connect to local struggles and foster communication between a range of grassroots resistance groups has been its strength.

Lessons From Seattle

By Starhawk

I've been doing a lot of thinking about Seattle and DC and the lessons both we and the police might learn from them. Just as we're able to organize internationally, so are the police. And just as we're drawing lessons from the last months of action, so will they be. Unfortunately, I think we can expect them to learn the wrong lessons from Seattle and DC.

In Seattle the police essentially ran amuck. They not only tear gassed and pepper sprayed us, they tear gassed whole neighborhoods of the city, rounded up and arrested people who weren't even part of the demonstration, and were still ineffective (probably their worst sin) in keeping the windows of downtown Seattle intact or making sure the WTO meeting could go on.

Why were they were unprepared for a blockade that was planned in open meetings for months ahead? My own personal theory is that our style of organization appeared to be so chaotic and was so different from what they see as organized that they just't see us as a threat. Both the Seattle and DC blockades were organized in a decentralized fashion, with affinity groups who could make autonomous decisions on the street. Affinity groups sent representatives to a larger spokescouncil before the action which could coordinate what we were doing and make larger decisions. We also had Tactical and Communications working groups who came up with the basic scenarioâ-to surround the Convention Center, to have affinity groups commit to a certain 'pie slice' of the map to defend, and to have 'iflying squads' who could move freely as needed.

Believe me, this looked, sounded and felt chaotic while it was being organized, but in practice it worked beautifully. We had thousands of trained activists on the streets who knew just what they were supposed to do to begin with, and who had the flexibility to make decisions and change their plans on the spot to respond to what was happening.

From the police point of view, it was disastrous. They came off looking both brutal and impotent. The city of Seattle was outraged, human rights advocates condemned them, and other police departments wondered how they could screw up so badly and let a few ragged demonstrators run them around.

In DC, the police were more subtle and better prepared. The DC police include something like 50 different police departments, from the Park Police to the Secret Service, but they all share an attitude that "Hey, we're from DC, we deal with demonstrations all the time. No way do you scare us!"

In fact, we did scare them to the point that they essentially turned much of DC into a police state, blocking off 60 square blocks on A16 and 90 square blocks on A17. By then they had grasped the fact that we are actually extremely well organized, albeit in our own anarchic fashion, and that worried them. They were also extremely freaked out by the 'anarchist' costume [black with ski mask or bandanna](simple, practical, elegant and slenderizing!) and seemed to think that any measures were justified in "saving the city" from this invasion of dangerous terrorists.

They adopted the following strategies:
Surveillance: they read listserves and perused all the anarchist, socalist, greenie, whatever websites, undoubtedly tapped phones and infiltrated meetings, and probably used informants.

Pre-emptive strikes and illegal arrests: On Saturday A15 they arrested 600 people at a peaceful march, surrounded them, ordered them to disperse and then prevented them from dispersing. That morning they closed down the Convergence Center, just as thousands of new people were arriving to be oriented and trained, confiscated the giant puppets, our medical supplies, and lots of peoples personal property. Both these actions were illegal. We did get the puppets back before the demonstration, but not the medical supplies. Police Chief Ramsay was quoted as saying the raid on the Convergence center had discombobulated the protestors. In reality, we regrouped quickly and still managed to train thousands of people that day although I ended up doing one training in an alley. The police also raided a private home and stopped cars, confiscating lockboxes and other blockading equipment.

Propaganda and paranoia: The more we look like terrorists, the more the police look like saviors and the more fancy equipment they can buy with beefed up budgets. So they claimed to have found a Molotov cocktail in the Convergence Center (our painting supplies), vats of homemade pepper spray (the soup for our lunch), etc.

Relatively restrained and localized use of force: The police did use tear gas, pepper spray and did beat people in DC, but mostly in smaller, more localized areas. They did not do vast sweeps through neighborhoods as in Seattle or attack the general population. Nor did they attempt to clear us all off the streets. Their general strategy was to set up their own barriers, establish their area of control, and then wait us out.

Negotiation: At one crucial moment on A17, Chief Ramsay came down and negotiated a voluntary arrest scenario instead of bringing out the tear gas and nightsticks. He's received a lot of credit for this, and undoubtedly deserves some although in the light of all the repressive police actions I can't quite see him as a great defender of democracy, especially given the brutal treatment the arrestees received in jail.

The truth is, none of these strategies could have stopped a single window from being broken in DC if that is what people had wanted to do. But Chief Ramsay is now being heralded as having saved the city, presumably from acts of unspeakable terrorism. The police forces around the US and worldwide are going to be studying these two actions in preparation for the upcoming summer events,and most likely drawing the wrong conclusions: that surveillance, pre-emptive strikes and illegal roundups are the way to go.

What we can expect and what we can do

Surveillance: Assume that the police are reading the listserves. (Hello, police, I hope you at least are getting paid to delete 57 messages a day about the protest in Thailand.) Assume your phones are tapped, and that anything planned in an open, public meeting is known. Classic nonviolent theory accepts this, says, "Hey, we're proud of what we're doing, we're not afraid of the consequences, and we have nothing to hide." I personally believe that most large actions are best organized around this philosophy, for a whole number of reasons, surveillance being only one. But if you do want to organize something that depends on surprise, don't do it on the internet, on the phone, or in an open meeting.

Pre-emptive arrests and disruption of our gatherings and meeting places: It may not be illegal yet to be an anarchist, socalist, feral, etc, but it may soon become extremely difficult to walk around freely if you look like one. I'm not suggesting you change your clothes or hairstyle - you have an absolute right to look however you want to look. But take extra precautions if you need to and do some careful strategizing about your visibility.

We also need to have backup plans of available spaces for trainings and gatherings (I know it's sometimes hard enough to find one space, let alone alternatives, but we should know what churches or union halls or schools might take us in in an emergency. That's what saved us in DC). We might also consider having several different puppet assembly sites, for example. And not keeping all the medical equipment, blockading aids or other vital supplies in the same place.

Police overresponse: The Jubilee 2000 folks, the Unions, the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers may still be able to have a big march without police interference, but I think we can assume that anything that looks like a direct action on the Seattle or DC or Mayday model may call forth the nightsticks and tear gas on very little provocation. Again, we simply need to be prepared and alert. If you bring children to a demonstration or have health concerns around tear gas, stay especially alert and keep an eye out for an escape route. Have someone prepared to do support for people who unexpectedly get arrested. Know who you can call for emergency help or to mobilize legal support.

Negotiation: Whether or not we negotiate with the police, and to what extent, is a political decision. The wisdom of negotiation may vary from action to action, city to city, moment to moment. We should bear in mind that it is a possibility at least some police forces are likely to embrace, and know that it may be one of our options.

Our strengths: One of the purposes of nonviolent direct action is to make the inherent violence of the system visible. Every time the police overreact or arrest us illegally, we have in some measure succeeded. We have many strengths in this movement that we can build on to resist police strategies and violence..

Some of them are: The affinity group model - I don't envy the forces of repression the challenge of trying to stop a movement based on autonomous affinity groups instead of centralized leadership. It's a bit like trying to clear Bermuda grass out of the garden - remove one clump and the others just send out runners and spread. The affinity group/spokescouncil process gives us just enough co-ordination to be effective while leaving room for great flexibility, spontaneity and creativity in responding to the situation of the moment. The decentralized model of decision making provides an experience of empowerment that can be life changing.

Affinity groups also give us moral, emotional and practical support in an action. And they make it harder for infiltrators and provocateurs to operate. While we've been forming them for these actions, we can build on their strengths by encouraging people to think of them as ongoing groups that might develop areas of special strengths and interests.

Trainings: the nonviolent direct action trainings make a big difference in how well people stand up to repression. Besides doing them just before an action, we need to develop more networks of trainers and find ways to offer them on an ongoing basis, so people can arrive for an action already prepared. This would also make them harder to disrupt by closing down a centralized space, as in DC. More ongoing training would also help people better face police overreaction in local demonstrations. Iím personally interested in working on this.

Dialogue, consensus and diversity: All of us who have been activists for a long time have seen movements factionalize and splinter. Over the last actions, however, I've seen issues that could have resulted in schisms instead become something to discuss. I've seen a real commitment in people across the spectrum to dialogue about our differences and work out conflicts - even in the midst of the action itself. If we can continue in this mode, we might be able to avoid some of the mistakes of the past, and we will make it harder for the police to divide us.

Consensus does not mean unanimous agreement. It means we create a forum where all voices can be heard and we can think creatively rather than dualistically about how to reconcile our different needs and visions. If you want a more militant action and I want to bring my infant - how do we make that work?--rather than who is right and who is wrong.

We need more ongoing forums for discussion. In the heat of preparation for an action, its hard to sit down and have a philosophical discussion about what nonviolence really means, or what economic vision we support in place of globalization, or whether property damage is appropriate. And at least some of these discussions need to take place face to face, not just online, where we can actually see and hear the person behind the position.

Courage and commitment: I've been thrilled and moved to see this incredible uprising of people willing to take risks, put themselves on the line, face violence and repression, and not give up. As a middle-aged activist, I'm especially joyful to see so many younger people with such dedication and determination. So many of my generation gave up. If you don't, if you become lifelong activists, then it won't matter what the police do or don't do, we will change the world.

I love you all,
Starhawk

Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc

Hi All,

Apologies if this sounds incoherent, I've had barely any sleep for the past couple days...

What a kick-ass two days! Taking part in the RACB was one of the proudest moments of my life as an anarchist.

On Sunday, we marched around the perimiter of the police occupied zone backing up the protesters who were trying to secure intersections by confronting cops and sometimes holding intersections until reinforcements arrived. Everywhere we went people fucking cheered.

The arrestables among us flattened police car and bus tires and spraypainted and stickered them, they yanked out fencing from construction sites and cut loose newspaper boxes and barricaded the streets with them. (On monday [today] I heard that anarchists picked up parked cars and used them as barricades!) The Black Bloc backed down the police MANY times over the past two days. All of this was done with incredible stealth and organization.

The Black Bloc was composed of a large number of women, the arrestables had about a 50/50 male to female ratio. The ethnic makeup was *way* more diverse than the mobilization as a whole.

The overall reaction to the Bloc by other protesters was very positive. There were a few hippies who were yelling at us about "non-violence", but the overwhelming majority of the protesters were overjoyed to see us. One intersection chanted "we love the anarchists"!

The Bloc saved many peoples asses over the past two days and most of the other protesters are very conscious of that. At one of the last protests today, a group of non-violent protesters did a symbolic crossing of the police line and had a press conference, during which they publicly stated that they supported the actions of the Black Bloc and expressed their solidarity with us.

We quite simply fucking rocked!

OK now the bad news. At least 20 of our comrades have been arrested. We don't know if they'll be charged with felonies. Hopefully, someone will have more information about that by tomorrow. If they are charged with felonies, we need to give them all the support we can.

I'm am so proud of everyone and so proud to have been a part of the Black Bloc. Our communications people did a fabulous job, our spraypaintin', tire flattenin', cop chasin' arrestables did a fabulous job, congratulations to everyone.

September 26 - Prague

Protest Against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank

Already, many groups around the world are preparing for this event, in recognition that the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people, societies and the environment for the profit of a few, is the prime cause of our social and ecological troubles. September 26-28 the IMF and World Bank are holding their 55th annual summit in Prague. A mass mobilisation of people to Prague is beginning. On September 26 peoples of the world will express their opposition to the World Bank and the IMF and their policies. Peoples of the world will join together in an expression of solidarity with the demonstrators in Prague.European grassroots groups have met recently and are planning a European wide mobilisation to Prague and also decentraslised action. The idea has been discussed and supported by several Latin American movements which met in Nicaragua recently. The Indian National Alliance of People's Movements' issued a statement, just before the A16 protests in Washington,

Examples of conceivable actions are: strikes - demonstrations - critical mass bike rides - carnivals - street parties - reclaiming streets, government land or office buildings for non commercial and good activities - marches - music - dancing - speeches - handing out flyers - banner hangings - distributing community controlled newspapers - street theatre - building gardens - handing out free food - mock trade fair's - offering no interest loans outside major banks - solidarity actions - pickets - occupations of offices - blockades and shutdowns - appropriating and disposing of luxury consumer goods - sabotaging, wrecking, or interfering with capitalist infrastructure - appropriating capitalist wealth and returning it to the working people - declaring oneself independent from capitalism and authoritarian governments - setting up grassroots' community councils and holding meetings outside city halls - setting up economic alternatives, like workers' co-operatives - promoting economic alternatives to capitalist companies - promoting grassroots based forms of community organisation - etc.

The process of building up our movements can and should be continued through further global days of action against capitalism in the future.Any "enquiries" or concerns about the September 26 global day of action should be directed to other activists in the group, city, country or on the various mailing lists, for us to mutually help each other with ideas and advise. There is no-one in charge or pulling the strings for the day.

It will be a radically decentralised and non-hierarchic event entirely of our own creation in co-operation and solidarity with one another.

Links

www.s11.org
www.antimedia.net/s11awol
www.lobsterparty.org
www.x21.org/s26/index.shtml
www.active.org.au
www.infoshop.org
www.damn.tao.ca
www.indymedia.org
www.iww.org.au
www.agp.org
www.agitprop.org/art&revolution
www.antimedia.net
www.green.net.au
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